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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains ideas for parents to encourage their children to be physically active. Twenty-one activities--incorporating such skills as jumping, balancing, and stretching--are described and illustrated, and variations are provided to accommodate children's different abilities. A "Physical Activity Pyramid" shows how to fit activity into daily life for health and fun. Dietary information and "The Food Guide Pyramid" (U.S. Department of Agriculture) are included. (ND)

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KIDS in action

FITNESS FOR CHILDREN

ED 413 321

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Dear Parents:

Physical activity is an important part of your child's life; it has a tremendous impact on physical, intellectual and emotional development. As adults, we have a responsibility to be role models for our children, sharing with them the pleasures and benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Developing a love of sports and a habit of regular physical activity as a child can be the foundation for a long, healthy life.

Good nutrition also is important for your child. As with physical activity, you are a role model. When you choose and prepare healthful foods, your child also will be more likely to follow your example. The first step toward helping your child eat a healthier diet is making a variety of nutritious foods readily available at home. That way your child can choose what he or she likes.

Make family meals a priority beginning with breakfast. Breakfast is important because it provides a major part of a child's daily energy supply. Children who eat breakfast are better nourished and are more likely to meet their daily need for certain essential vitamins and minerals than breakfast skippers. Parents should keep an assortment of convenient, nutritious breakfast choices available and within easy reach of their children. The best choices are high-carbohydrate, low-fat foods like cereal or cereal bars, low-fat milk and fruit.

Getting involved in your child's diet and fitness routine will show your support and help foster a great relationship.

This informative booklet was developed in partnership with the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and Kellogg Company. If you would like more information about exercise for children or fitness testing, please ask your child's teacher. You may also write to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports for additional information.

Best Wishes,

Maureen L. Storey, Ph.D.
Director, Nutrition Marketing

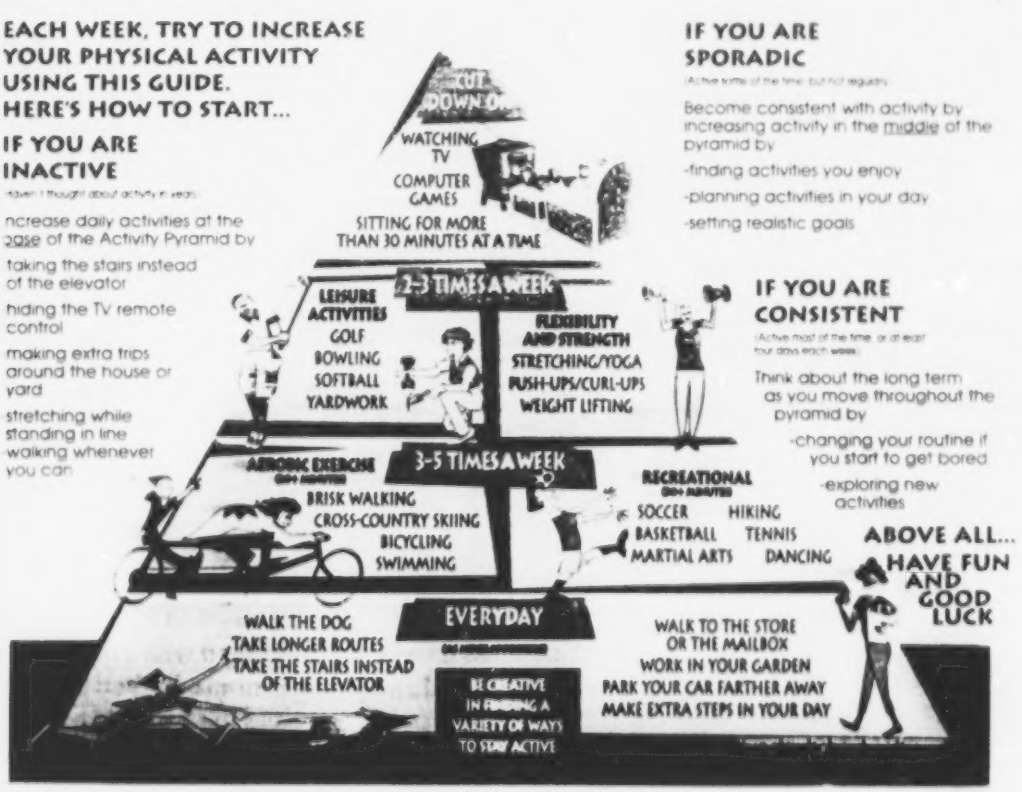
Sandra Perlmutter
President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

How To Use This Booklet

The challenge for parents is to find ways to encourage their children to be physically active. This booklet contains some ideas for activities that you and your children can do together.

Initially some activities may be more difficult than others. With practice most activities will become easier. Activity variations are suggested to accommodate children's different abilities.

The following Physical Activity Pyramid shows how each of us can fit activity into our daily lives for health and fun!


EACH WEEK, TRY TO INCREASE YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY USING THIS GUIDE. HERE'S HOW TO START...
IF YOU ARE INACTIVE
(Active some of the time, but not regularly)
Increase daily activities at the base of the Activity Pyramid by
taking the stairs instead of the elevator
hiding the TV remote control
making extra trips around the house or yard
stretching while standing in line walking whenever you can
SIT DOWN &
WATCHING TV
COMPUTER GAMES
SITTING FOR MORE THAN 30 MINUTES AT A TIME
2-3 TIMES A WEEK
LEISURE ACTIVITIES
GOLF
BOWLING
SOFTBALL
YARDWORK
FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTH
STRETCHING/YOGA
PUSH-UPS/CURL-UPS
WEIGHT LIFTING
3-5 TIMES A WEEK
AEROBIC EXERCISE
(20+ minutes)
BRISK WALKING
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING
BICYCLING
SWIMMING
RECREATIONAL
(20+ minutes)
SOCCER
BASKETBALL
MARTIAL ARTS
HIKING
TENNIS
DANCING
EVERYDAY
(30 minutes)
WALK THE DOG
TAKE LONGER ROUTES
TAKE THE STAIRS INSTEAD OF THE ELEVATOR
BE CREATIVE IN FINDING A VARIETY OF WAYS TO STAY ACTIVE
WALK TO THE STORE OR THE MAILBOX
WORK IN YOUR GARDEN
PARK YOUR CAR FARTHER AWAY
MAKE EXTRA STEPS IN YOUR DAY
IF YOU ARE SPORADIC
(Active some of the time, but not regularly)
Become consistent with activity by increasing activity in the middle of the pyramid by
-finding activities you enjoy
-planning activities in your day
-setting realistic goals
IF YOU ARE CONSISTENT
(Active most of the time, or at least four days each week)
Think about the long term as you move throughout the pyramid by
-changing your routine if you start to get bored
-exploring new activities
ABOVE ALL...
HAVE FUN AND GOOD LUCK

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KIDS IN ACTION

1. Over-Under-Around

Adult sits on floor, legs apart. Child moves around parent going over legs. Parent forms a bridge. Child goes under and around.

Variations:

Lower or raise height of body.

Have child roll ball over-under-around.

Have child form bridge.

2. Twister

Child takes a pole and holding it with both hands, steps through the triangle formed by the arms and pole. The child then should be able to step foot by foot forward and backward without letting go of the stick.

3. Jump the Stick

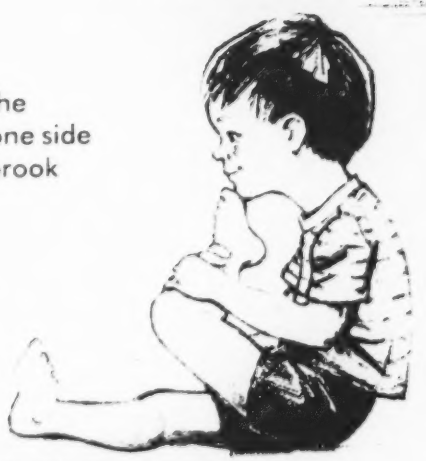
Parent holds a pole just above the floor and child jumps over.

Variations:
Change the height of the pole.
Move the pole back and forth.
Vary the speed of the pole.

4. Jump the Brook

Use a towel or mark the sidewalk with the "banks of the brook." Child stands on one side of the brook and attempts to jump the brook without "falling in."

Variations:
Increase the width of the brook.



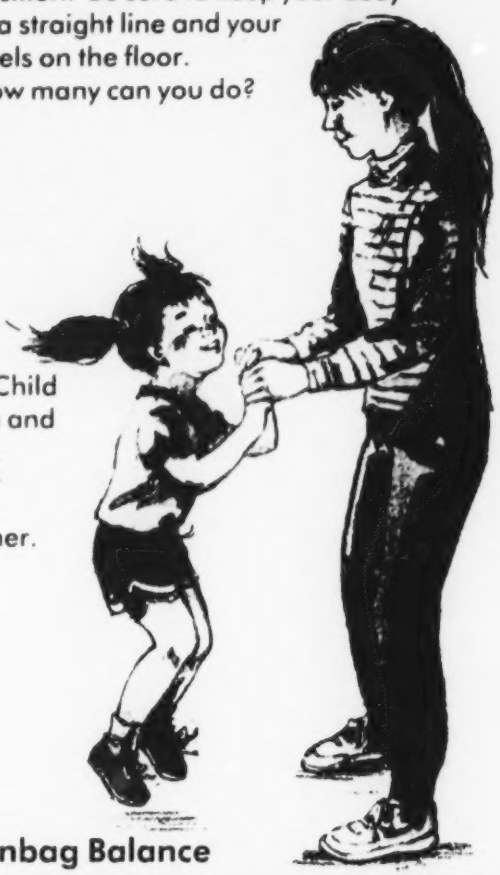
5. Simon Says

Simon says: "Can you touch your toe to your chin?" Select body parts that encourage stretching.

Variations:
Touch your ear to your shoulder.
Touch your toe to your elbow.
Touch your knee to your ankle.
Touch your knee to your elbow.
Touch your nose to your knee.

6. Wall Push-ups

Stand about arms distance away from a wall with your legs together. Place your hands on the wall just a little wider than your shoulders. Lean forward and touch your nose to the wall and push back to your starting position. Be sure to keep your body in a straight line and your heels on the floor.
How many can you do?



7. Jumping Beans

Hold the child's hands in yours. Child starts bouncing, then jumping up and down. Stop, rest and start again.

Variations:
Hop on one foot and then the other.
Vary the speed (fast, slow).

8. Beanbag Balance

Place a beanbag (or soft toy) on the child's head. Ask the child to walk from one place to another without dropping the beanbag. To make it easier, have the child hold the beanbag in place.

Variations:
Place the beanbag on other body parts (e.g., back of hand, shoulder, elbow).
Use a different toy or more than one toy.
Walk around or under things.

9. Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Parent sits with legs apart, child sits opposite with legs in the middle. Grasp the child's hands. Child leans back as if "rowing a boat", then pulls to upright sit. Repeat. Sing "Row, row, row your boat."

10. Wheelbarrow

Child lays face down on the floor. Parent grasps child's ankles and lifts upward. Ask the child to push up with arms until arms are straight. With head up, walk the hands forward. Child's body should not sag.

11. Toe-Walking

Walk around on your toes.

Variations:
Carry an object.
Swing your arms.

12. Statues

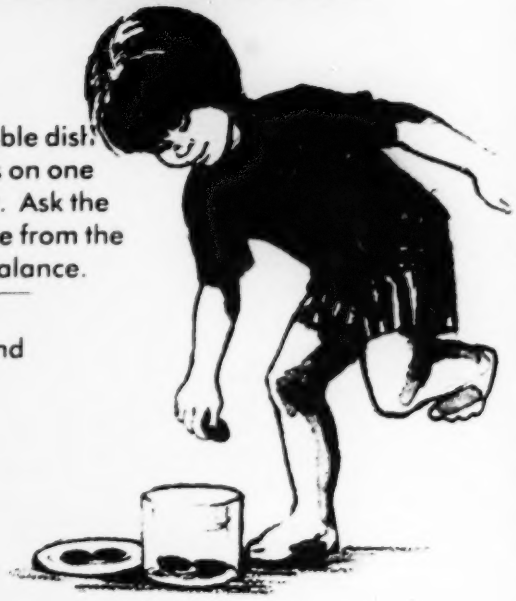
Can you balance on one foot for the count of "4 alligators"? (One alligator, two alligators ...)

Variations:
Count more alligators.
Balance in different postures (i.e., statues).

13. One-Foot Balance Game

Place 5 small objects on an unbreakable dish near another container. Child stands on one foot in front of the dish and container. Ask the child to move the objects one at a time from the dish to the container without losing balance.

Variations:
Vary the distance between the dish and container.
Time the game.



14. Inch Worm

Child bends over, placing both hands on the floor. The feet are kept stationary while the hands walk forward as far as possible. Then the hands remain stationary while the feet walk forward as close to the hands as possible. Repeat the cycle.

15. Egg Roll

Sit on the floor with the legs drawn up to the body and the knees spread outward. Holding the feet with the hands, roll over to the right, across the back to left, and return to the sitting position. Keep the hands around the feet throughout.

16. Somersault

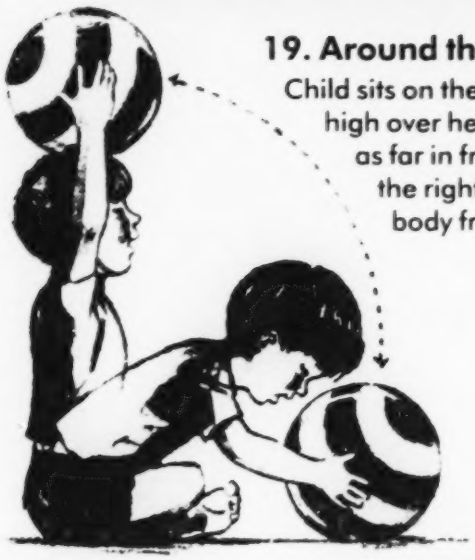
Teach your child to roll backwards and forwards. Make sure the child's chin is close to the chest and that weight rests on shoulders and not on head. Be sure to practice on a sofa or cushions.

17. Up-Up-Down-Down

Repeat the cadence, "up-up-down-down" as parent and child step up (right), step up (left), step down (right), step down (left) on the first step of the stairs.

18. Clutch ball

Child sits on floor and holds a ball tightly between legs with hands above head. Parent lifts child in the air by the arms and child tries to keep ball from dropping.



19. Around the World

Child sits on the floor with legs crossed. Lift ball high over head. Reach forward to place ball as far in front as possible. Reach as far to the right and to the left without lifting body from the floor.

20. Catch

Parent and child stand 2-3 yards apart. Bounce ball so that each can catch without leaving their place. If child has difficulty with catching a ball, use a balloon (mylar) – it travels much slower.

Variations:
Clap your hands before catching (or spin around).
Throw and catch without a bounce. Two bounces rather than one.

21. Throw

Can you fly a paper airplane? Child practices throwing paper airplane.

Variations:
Throw ball made of newspaper or old pantyhose.
Throw objects upstairs (How far up the stairs can you throw ball?)

A Note to Parents

Balancing the foods you eat with physical activity will help you and your child maintain or improve your weight. Teaching a child how to eat a balanced diet now will help them for the rest of their life.

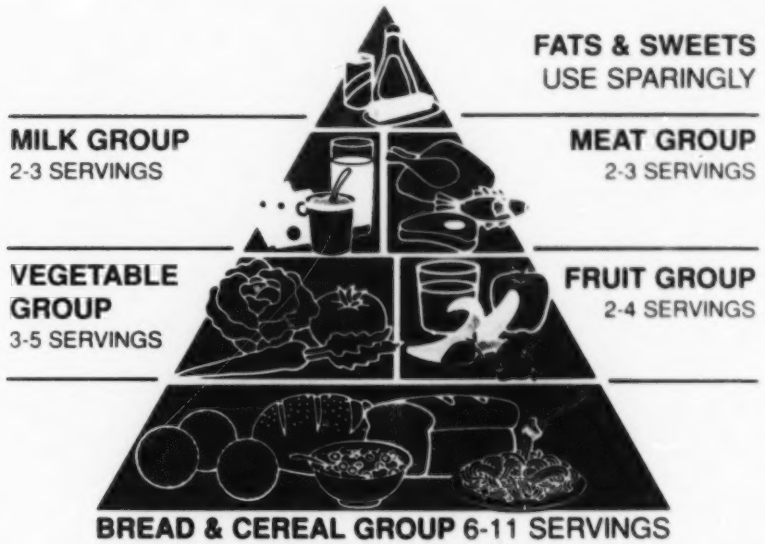
The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest choosing a varied diet

- with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits
- low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- moderate in sugars
- moderate in salt and sodium

The following USDA Food Guide Pyramid guidelines can help you serve balanced meals to your whole family. The Pyramid is an outline of what to eat each day. It's not a rigid prescription but a general guide that lets you and your child choose a healthful diet. The Pyramid calls for eating a variety of foods to get the nutrients needed and at the same time the right amount of calories to maintain a healthy weight.

The Food Guide Pyramid

A Guide to Daily Food Choices



SOURCE: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL
ON PHYSICAL FITNESS
AND SPORTS

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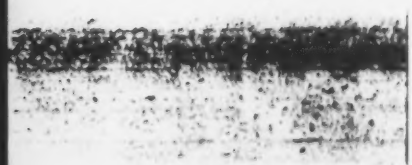

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